

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 NEW DE 02162 01 OF 02 111843Z

41

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NEAE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 IO-11 EA-07 EUR-12 OMB-01 AID-05 PC-01 ACDA-05

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P 111306Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3959

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 NEW DELHI 2162

FOLLOWING TEL MADRAS 0270 DTD 11 FEB 76 RCVD NEW DELHI
BEING REPEATED TO YOU. QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRAS 0270

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, IN

SUBJ: REACTION TO PRESIDENT'S RULE IN TAMIL NADU

1. THE FOLLOWING REPRESENTS OUR INITIAL ASSESSMENT OF
POPULAR REACTION TO THE IMPOSITION OF PRESIDENT'S
RULE IN TAMIL NADU ON JANUARY 31.

2. ON THE SURFACE THE GENERAL REACTION HAS BEEN ONE
OF SILENT, PEACEFUL ACCEPTANCE. POSITIVE EXPRESSIONS
OF WELCOME HAVE BEEN LIMITED TO PREDICTABLE GROUPS,
PRINCIPALLY POLITICAL PARTIES OPPOSED TO THE DMK WHO
HOPE TO GAIN FROM ITS BEING TOPPLED FROM POWER. WHILE
IT IS DIFFICULT AT THIS POINT TO GUAGE THE DEEPER
GENERAL REACTION, WE ARE REASONABLY CERTAIN IT HAS NOT
BEEN "A SIGH OF RELIEF," AS CLAIMED BY THE GOI MINISTER
OF HOME AFFAIRS THE OTHER DAY NOR THE "JUBILATION" CLAIMED
BY SOME LOCAL CONGRESS (R) PEOPLE. THE SURFACE
REACTION APPEARS ALMOST APATHETIC. APART FROM THE
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PAGE 02 NEW DE 02162 01 OF 02 111843Z

OBVIOUS POLITICAL BENEFICIARIES, OPPORTUNISTS, AND SOME

BRAHMIN'S, FEW VOLUNTEER SUPPORT FOR KARUNANIDHI'S DISMISSAL, BUT, EQUALLY, FEW PUBLICLY VOLUNTEER SUPPORT FOR HIM AND HIS LATE GOVERNMENT. HOWEVER, WE BELIEVE THAT SOME OF THIS APPARENT APATHY MASKS THE NEW ELEMENT OF FEAR WHICH THE LARGE SCALE ARRESTS AND PRESENCE OF OUTSIDE SECURITY FORCES HAVE NOW INTRODUCED INTO TAMIL NADU.

3. UNDER THE SURFACE, WE BELIEVE THERE IS RESENTMENT OVER THE HIGH-HANDED TREATMENT MRS GANDHI HAS METED OUT ON WHAT ARE CONSIDERED SHOPWORN CHARGES DUSTED OFF TO SUIT HER NEEDS, AS WELL AS A FEELING THAT THE MERITS OR DEMERITS OF THE DMK GOVERNMENT SHOULD HAVE BEEN PASSED UPON BY THE PEOPLE IN AN ELECTION AND NOT BY MRS GANDHI. OUR LOCAL EMPLOYEES REPORT THAT AMONG TRADITIONAL SUPPORTERS OF THE DMK, PARTICULARLY THE POORER ELEMENTS, CONTINUED APPRECIATION OF THE DMK'S WELFARE MEASURES FOR THE UNDERPRIVILEGED FAR OUTWEIGHS ANY IMPACT OF CORRUPTION OR OTHER CHARGES. ONCE UNCOMMITTED MIDDLE CLASS CONTACTS, WHO HAVE NO PARTICULAR BRIEF FOR THE DMK BUT RECOGNIZE ITS ACCOMPLISHMENTS AS WELL AS ITS LAPSES, DISPLAY A HO-HUM REACTION TO THE STATED GROUNDS OF DISMISSAL AND GENERALLY BELIEVE THAT KARUNANIDHI'S REAL SIN WAS HOLDING AND EXPRESSING OPINIONS UNPALATABLE TO MRS GANDHI. THIS SUB-SURFACE RESENTMENT OVER MRS GANDHI'S EVIDENT DETERMINATION TO BRING TAMIL NADU TO HEEL HAS ALSO EVOKED SOME OF THE TRADITIONAL TAMIL POLITICAL AND CULTURAL SENSITIVITIES. OUR LOCAL EMPLOYEES HAVE FOUND THIS SENTIMENT QUITE EXPLICITLY ARTICULATEDD AMONG LESS SOPHISTICATED DMK SYMPATHIZERS, WHO ALLUDE OPENLY TO A THREAT OF TAMIL SUBORDINATION "TO THE NORTH AND THE BRAHMIN'S." BUT IT IS NOT LIMITED TO THE LESS SOPHISTICATED. A RETIRED GOI OFFICIAL, A TAMIL, TOLD ME LAST NIGHT THAT THE APPARENT APATHY WAS MISLEADING AND MASKED WHAT HE BELIEVED WAS WIDESPREAD AND DEEP RESENTMENT. THE MAIN REASON FOR THE CALM SO FAR WAS KARUNANIDHI'S APPEALS TO HIS FOLLOWERS NOT TO RESORT TO VIOLENCE. HE SAID THE RESENTMENT

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 NEW DE 02162 01 OF 02 111843Z

WAS "A VOLCANO" AND IT COULD EVENTUALLY ERUPT, PARTICULARLY IF, AS HE EXPECTED, MORE REPRESSIVE MEASURES WERE TAKEN.

4. WHILE WE BELIEVE THERE IS UNHAPPINESS AND RESENTMENT, WE DO NOT LOOK FOR ANY EARLY ERUPTION. FROM ALL INDICATIONS, PEOPLE ARE OUTWARDLY GOING ALONG JTEUOPB DMKF FLAGS FLYING OVER VILLAGES AND HUTS HAVE COME DOWN AND SOME

HAVE BEEN REPLACED BY CONGRESS FLAGS,
THOUGH IN DMK STRONGHOLDS THE RED AND BLACK FLAGS
STILL FLY. WE NOTE THAT DMK MEMBERS HAVE STOPPED
SPORTING THEIR RED AND BLACK BORDERED SHAWLS AND
HAVE GONE IN FOR MORE
NEUTRAL COLORS. THE COERCIVE
PRESSURES THAT ARE BEING EXERTED ON INDIVIDUAL DMK
MEMBERS ARE ALSO SHOWING SOME RESULTS. EVERY DAY
THE NEWSPAPERS REPORT A FEW MORE DEFECTIONS, SOME
FROM OPPORTUNISM NO DOUBT, BUT MANY, WE SUSPECT, FROM
POLICE THREATS. BUT SO FAR, EXCEPT FOR A FEW WOBBLY
AND VUNERABLE MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT AND FORMER
MLAS, NOBODY OF ANY SIGNIFICANCE HAS LEFT THE PARTY.

UNQUOTE

NOTE BY OC/T: PARA 4 AS RECEIVED.

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PAGE 01 NEW DE 02162 02 OF 02 111853Z

47

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NEAE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

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P 111306Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3960

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 NEW DELHI 2162

PARTY LEADERS TELL US THEY EXPECT FURTHER DEFECTIONS
AS COERCIVE PRESSURES MOUNT. THE PARTY IS CLEARLY OFF
BALANCE AT THE MOMENT, AS THE WHOLESALE ARRESTS OF
DISTRICT, TALUG AND EVEN VILLAGE LEVEL WORKERS HAVE COME
CLOSE TO DESTROYING THE ESTABLISHED COMMUNICATIONS LINKS
BETWEEN THE TOP LEADERSHIP AND THE PARTY RANK AND FILE.
MORE IMPORTANT, PERHAPS, FOR THE SHORT RANGE PROSPECTS

FOR ANY STRONGER REACTIONS HAS BEEN THE LARGE SCALE
ARREST OF MOST OF THE DMK GOONDAS AND TROUBLEMAKERS.

5. DESPITE THE STATEMENTS OF THE NEW GOI ADVISERS ABOUT
THEIR DETERMINATION TO TONE UP THE ADMINISTRATION,
THERE IS SKEPTICISM AT ALL LEVELS OVER HOW IMPARTIAL
THE NEW REGIME CAN BE AND AN EXPECTATION THAT THE CONGRESS
POLITICANS WILL SOON MOVE IN THE INFLUENCE THE ADMINISTRATION.
FORMER CONGRESS CHIEF MINISTER BHAKTAVATSALAM DID NOTHING
TO DAMPEN SUCH EXPECTATIONS BY CALLING PUBLICLY FOR A
PARTY COMMITTEE TO "HELP" THE ADVISERS, AND HE HAS
REPORTEDLY SUBMITTED THE NAME OF HIS CANDIDATE TO
SUCCEED CHIEF SECRETARY SABANAYAGAM, WHO IS EXPECTED
TO BE POSTED TO DELHI. THE GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE
CONGRESS (R) HAS BEEN VISITING THE SECRETARIAT TO CALL
ON OFFICIALS AND OPENLY TOLD SOME SECRETARIAT EMPLOYEES
SHE WAS THERE TO SEE THAT "RED AND BLACK FELLOWS"
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PAGE 02 NEW DE 02162 02 OF 02 111853Z

WERE REMOVED. WHEN I ASKED ONE SENIOR IAS OFFICER
HOW HE WAS ENJOYING BEING AN UNFETTERED BUREAUCRAT, HE
REPLIED; "FINE, BUT IT WON'T LAST MORE THAN A FEW
DAYS. THEN THE OTHER SIDE WILL BE IN TRYING TO
PUSH US IN THEIR DIRECTION." ANOTHER SENIOR IAS
OFFICER TOLD ME LAST NIGHT THAT HE STARTED GETTING
PRESSURES FROM THE CONGRESS PEOPLE ON FEBRUARY 3.

6. IN SUM, WE BELIEVE THERE IS A DEEPER REACTION THAN
THE
APATHY APPARENT ON THE SURFACE AND THAT IT IS A
SOMEWHAT TROUBLED ONE, AS THE PEOPLE OF TAMIL NADU SEEK
TO ADJUST, FOR THE FIRST TIME, TO THE IMPOSITION OF
PRESIDENT'S RULE IN CIRCUMSTANCES THAT MANY REGARD
AS HUMBLING. THIS REACTION, THE STRENGTH OF WHICH
IS DIFFICULT TO JUDGE, CONTAINS SOME SEEDS OF TROUBLE,
AND THE RELEASE FROM JAIL OF SOME OF THE "ANTISOCIAL
ELEMENTS," WHICH IS ANTICIPATED AFTER MRS GANDHI'S
VISIT, COULD LEAD TO SOME ISOLATED INCIDENTS. HOWEVER,
WE DO NOT NOW ANTICIPATE ANY SERIOUS DEVELOPMENT ALONG
THOSE LINES. THE TAMILS ARE PROUD, BUT ALSO PRACTICAL
PEOPLE, AND THEY RECOGNIZE THAT MRS GANDHI HAS THE
WHIP HAND. BUT EVEN IF MRS GANDHI AVOIDS THE KIND OF
PROVOCATION WHICH COULD, AS IN THE MID-1960'S,
BRING TAMIL SELF-RESPECT AND LATENT FEARS DRAMATICALLY
TO THE SURFACE, THE LONGER TERM FESTERING OF RESENTMENT
AND FEELINGS OF DISCRIMINATION COULD, AS THE EMBASSY
HAS SUGGESTED (NEW DELHI 3782), INCREASE REGIONAL
SUSPICIONS AND INJURE THE INTEGRITY OF THE COUNTRY.
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